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**In the Claims:**

1-7 (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) A web-based method of providing healthcare services to patients, the method comprising the following performed by a web-based data processing system:

accepting entry of information about a medical condition of a patient, wherein the information is entered via a web-based client device in communication with the web-based data processing system;

assigning the patient to one of a plurality of pools of patients based on the one or more attributes of the patient from the entered patient information and/or based on one or more attributes of a healthcare provider qualified to advise patients in the assigned pool, wherein the one or more patient attributes are selected from the group consisting of patient geographical location, patient age, patient medical condition, patient willingness to pay healthcare provider, and patient ability to pay healthcare provider, and wherein the one or more healthcare provider attributes are selected from the group consisting of healthcare provider specialty, proximity of patient to healthcare provider, volume of healthcare provider patients, previous relationship between healthcare provider and patient, contractual obligations of healthcare provider, range of fees healthcare provider is willing to accept, and healthcare provider licenses;

allowing a healthcare provider qualified to treat patients in the assigned pool to view the patient information; ~~and~~

providing a secure area within which the healthcare provider provides a diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation for the medical condition of the patient, wherein the secure area is accessible by the patient via the web-based client device;

notifying the patient via electronic communication that the healthcare provider has provided a diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation for the medical condition of the patient within the secure area; and

allowing the patient to access the secure area and, via the secure area, view the diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider.

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communicate iteratively with the healthcare provider regarding the diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation, and select a treatment option.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 8, wherein the information is entered by the patient via one or more templates that are specifically designed to invoke answers to questions related to the medical condition in a predetermined, structured format.

12. (Original) The method according to Claim 8, wherein a treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider includes a medication prescription, and further comprising communicating the medication prescription to a pharmacy for fulfillment.

13. (Original) The method according to Claim 8, wherein a treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider includes a request to perform laboratory services on the patient, and further comprising communicating the request for laboratory services to a provider of laboratory services for fulfillment.

14. (Original) The method according to Claim 13, further comprising communicating results of the laboratory services to the patient.

15. (Original) The method according to Claim 8, further comprising the following performed prior to accepting entry of information about a medical condition of a patient:

identifying the patient; and

verifying that the patient is eligible to receive healthcare services.

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16. (Cancelled)

17. (Original) The method according to Claim 9, wherein allowing the patient to access the secure area and view the diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider comprises allowing the patient to select a specific medication prescription for treating the patient.

18-24 (Cancelled)

25. (Currently Amended) A web-based data processing system that facilitates the provision of healthcare services to patients, comprising:

means for accepting entry of information about a medical condition of a patient, wherein the information is entered via a web-based client device in communication with the data processing system;

means for assigning the patient to one of a plurality of pools of patients based on the one or more attributes of the patient from the entered patient information and/or based on one or more attributes of a healthcare provider qualified to advise patients in the assigned pool, wherein the one or more patient attributes are selected from the group consisting of patient geographical location, patient age, patient medical condition, patient willingness to pay healthcare provider, and patient ability to pay healthcare provider, and wherein the one or more healthcare provider attributes are selected from the group consisting of healthcare provider specialty, proximity of patient to healthcare provider, volume of healthcare provider patients, previous relationship between healthcare provider and patient, contractual obligations of healthcare provider, range of fees healthcare provider is willing to accept, and healthcare provider licenses;

means for allowing a healthcare provider qualified to treat patients in the assigned pool to view the patient information; and

means for providing a secure area within which the healthcare provider provides a diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation for the medical condition of the patient, wherein the secure area is accessible by the patient via the web-based client device;

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means for notifying the patient via electronic communication that the healthcare provider has provided a diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation for the medical condition of the patient within the secure area; and

means for allowing the patient to access the secure area and, via the secure area, view the diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider, communicate iteratively with the healthcare provider regarding the diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation, and select a treatment option.

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Cancelled)

28. (Currently Amended) The data processing system according to Claim 25, wherein the information is entered by the patient via one or more templates that are specifically designed to invoke answers to questions related to the medical condition in a predetermined, structured format.

29. (Original) The data processing system according to Claim 25, wherein a treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider includes a medication prescription, and further comprising means for communicating the medication prescription to a pharmacy for fulfillment.

30. (Original) The data processing system according to Claim 25, wherein a treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider includes a request to perform laboratory services on the patient, and further comprising means for communicating the request for laboratory services to a provider of laboratory services for fulfillment.

31. (Original) The data processing system according to Claim 25, further comprising:

means for identifying the patient; and

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means for verifying that the patient is eligible to receive healthcare services.

32. (Cancelled)

33. (Original) The data processing system according to Claim 26, wherein the means for allowing the patient to access the secure area and view the diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider comprises means for allowing the patient to select a specific medication prescription for treating the patient.

34-40 (Cancelled)

41. (Currently Amended) A web-based computer program product that facilitates the provision of healthcare services to patients, the computer program product comprising a computer usable storage medium having computer readable program code embodied in the medium, the computer readable program code comprising:

computer readable program code that accepts entry of information about a medical condition of a patient, wherein the information is entered via a web-based client device in communication with a web-based data processing system;

computer readable program code that assigns the patient to one of a plurality of pools of patients based on the one or more attributes of the patient from the entered patient information and/or based on one or more attributes of a healthcare provider qualified to advise patients in the assigned pool, wherein the one or more patient attributes are selected from the group consisting of patient geographical location, patient age, patient medical condition, patient willingness to pay healthcare provider, and patient ability to pay healthcare provider, and wherein the one or more healthcare provider attributes are selected from the group consisting of healthcare provider specialty, proximity of patient to healthcare provider, volume of healthcare provider patients, previous relationship between healthcare provider and patient, contractual obligations of healthcare provider, range of fees healthcare provider is willing to accept, and healthcare provider licenses;

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computer readable program code that allows a healthcare provider qualified to treat patients in the assigned pool to view the patient information; ~~and~~

computer readable program code that provides a secure area within which the healthcare provider provides a diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation for the medical condition of the patient, wherein the secure area is accessible by the patient via the web-based client device;

computer readable program code that notifies the patient via electronic communication that the healthcare provider has provided a diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation for the medical condition of the patient within the secure area; and

computer readable program code that allows the patient to access the secure area and, via the secure area, view the diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider, communicate iteratively with the healthcare provider regarding the diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation, and select a treatment option.

42. (Cancelled)

43. (Cancelled)

44. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to Claim 41, wherein the information is entered by the patient via one or more templates that are specifically designed to invoke answers to questions related to the medical condition in a predetermined, structured format.

45. (Original) The computer program product according to Claim 41, wherein a treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider includes a medication prescription, and further comprising computer readable program code that communicates the medication prescription to a pharmacy for fulfillment.

46. (Original) The computer program product according to Claim 41, wherein a treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider includes a request

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to perform laboratory services on the patient, and further comprising computer readable program code that communicates the request for laboratory services to a provider of laboratory services for fulfillment.

47. (Original) The computer program product according to Claim 41, further comprising:

computer readable program code that identifies the patient; and  
computer readable program code that verifies that the patient is eligible to receive healthcare services.

48. (Cancelled)

49. (Original) The computer program product according to Claim 42, wherein the computer readable program code that allows the patient to access the secure area and view the diagnosis and/or treatment recommendation provided by the healthcare provider comprises computer readable program code that allows the patient to select a specific medication prescription for treating the patient.